

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 01578 211701Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----072955 211705Z /47

O 211602Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7300
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY
USINT BAGHDAD PRIORITY

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 1578

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, SY, LE, IS, IZ
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: MOVEMENT OF IRAQI TRUCK CONVOY

REF: A) DAMASCUS 1553 NOTAL B) STATE 71173

SUMMARY: HAVE STILL RECEIVED NO MESSAGE FROM KHADDAM
IN RESPONSE TO LAST NIGHT'S DEMARCHE ABOUT IRAQ. REVIEWED
OUR ARGUMENTS AGAINST SYRIA FACILITATING INVOLVEMENT OF
IRAQI FORCES WITH DEPFONMIN QADDUR THIS AFTERNOON. MEANWHILE,
KHADDAM AND ASSAD HAVE BEEN MEETING WITH LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER
HOSS. END SUMMARY.

1. JUST AFTER KHADDAM HAD SEEN OFF HIS YEMENI, IRAQI AND
ALGERIAN COUNTERPARTS THIS MORNING AND RETURNED TO TOWN,
LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER HOSS ARRIVED DAMASCUS (BEIRUT
1511). FONMIN THEREFORE PASSED WORD HE COULD NOT RECEIVE ME AT
THAT POINT AND ASKED I MEET WITH DEPFONMIN QADDUR.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 DAMASC 01578 211701Z

MEETING TOOK PLACE AT 1400L. QADDUR NOTED THAT LAST
NIGHT'S STEADFASTNESS CONFERENCE LASTED UNTIL 0130L (BY SEPTTEL,
WE REPORT ITS NOTABLY VACUOUS COMMUNIQUE WHICH CAN BE READ
AS COMMITTING ALL CONCERNED TO NOTHING.) HE SAID FONMIN HAD
RECEIVED TEXT OF OUR MESSAGE (PARA 4 REF B) ABOUT
THE SAME TIME THE CONFERENCE WAS ENDING
BUT HE HAD NOT GIVEN QADDUR ANY REACTION TO RELAY TO ME.

QADDUR HAD ALSO READ OUT TEXT.

2. DECIDED TO REVIEW BACKGROUND OF ORIGINAL MESSAGE AND QADDUR TOOK NOTES ON SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION TO INFORM KHADDAM. OBSERVED OUR MESSAGE HAD BEEN PROMPTED BY DISMAY THAT AT TIME WHEN WE ARE DOING UTMOST TO GET UNIFIL IN PLACE, ELEMENTS SUCH AS THE IRAQIS SHOULD TURN UP TO DESTABILIZE AND FURTHER COMPLICATE EFFORTS TO GET RAPID ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AND RESTORE LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY. NOTED AREA RADIOS WERE REPORTING ARRIVAL OF SECOND IRAQI CONVOY IN BIQA VALLY BEFORE DAWN TODAY. SAID I HAD NOT SEEN AN OFFICIAL GOL STATEMENT ABOUT ITS POSITION ON THE PRESENCE OF ARAB FORCES-OTHER THAN THOSE UNDER ADF CONTROL-BUT I HAD BEEN PLEASED TO READ KHADDAM'S PRESS STATEMENT FOLLOWING LAST NIGHT'S CONFERENCE THAT THE ARRIVAL OF ANY OTHER FORCES WAS PRIMARILY CONCERN OF LEGITIMATE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES. I PRESUMED GOL WOULD CONSIDER IRAQI ARRIVAL A COMPLICATING FACTOR.

3. QADDUR ASKED WHEN WE EXPECTED UNIFIL OPERATION TO START. REPLIED IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT THE PRECISE TIME REQUIRED TO MOBILIZE AND WE FORESEE UNEASY AND DANGEROUS INTERIM PERIOD. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, I NOTED THAT WITHIN ISRAELI LEADERSHIP DEEP DISAGREEMENTS HAD EMERGED ABOUT CONDUCT OF THE INVASION OF LEBANON IN RECENT DAYS. COMMENTED THAT REACTION OF INDIVIDUAL IDF
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 DAMASC 01578 211701Z

COMMANDERS WAS ACCORDINGLY UNPREDICTABLE. RECALLING SHARON'S UNAUTHORIZED DEVOIRSOIR INITIATIVE DURING THE OCTOBER WAR, NOTED THAT ONE COULD NOT RULE OUT EITHER ACCIDENTAL IDF/ADF CLASHES OR INCIDENTS UNDERTAKEN WITHOUT TOP LEVEL AUTHORIZATION DESIGNED TO PROVOKE A WIDER CONFLICT. OBSERVED THAT ON ARAB SIDE SOME AMONG FEDAYEEN LEADERSHIP ARE EUPHORIC ABOUT THE ISRAELI INVASION AND NFOR AOT ENTIRELY PATRIOTIC MOTIVES. THEY HAVE SPECIAL INTEREST IN KEEPING DONATIONS FLOWING FROM ARAB OIL STATES AND CONSIDER ISRAELI INVASION GOOD FOR FUND RAISING AND RECRUITING. (QADDUR PROTESTED THIS ONLY MILDLY.)

4. QADDUR AGREED BOTH THAT IS ESSENTIAL TO RESTORE LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY TO SOUTH LEBANON SOONEST AND THAT INTRODUCTION OF UNIFIL WILL BE USEFUL STEP TOWARDS THAT GOAL. I SAID IN THAT CASE I WOULD APPRECIATE GEARING FROM KHADDAM WHETHER SYRIA THOUGHT THAT INTRODUCTION OF IRAQI FORCES WOULD BE AN OBSTACLE TO STABILIZATION OF THE SITUATION AND SPEEDY RESTORATION OF LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY. QADDUR SAID HE WOULD RELAY MY COMMENTS AND QUESTION TO KHADDAM AS SOON AS LATTER HAD COMPLETED MEETING WITH HOSS. HE THEN VOLUNTEERED HE HAD JUST READ ISRAELI

CHIEF OF STAFF GUR'S STATEMENT CALLING FOR AN AGREEMENT
TETWEEN ADF, LEBANON AND ISRAEL TO CONTROL THE FEDAYEEN.
HE CHARACTERIZED THIS AS TOTALLY UNREALISTIC
EXCEPTION ON ISRAEL' S PART. (HE DID NOT, HOWEVER,
CHALLENGE MY SUGGESTION THAT SOME SUCH ARRANGEMENT MIGHT BE
DISCREETLY WORKED OUT THROUGH SIILASVOU'S MEDIATION.)

5. COMMENT: KHADDAM MAY NOT GIVE CLEARCUT ANSWER TO
THIS QUESTION; HE HAS BEEN ALLERGIC TO SHARING SARG'S
THINKING WITH US IN ANY DETAIL, PREFERRING TO LEAVE
SYRIAN POLICY OPEN TO VARYING INTERPRETATION. IN ANY
CASE, WE HAVE NOW TWICE REGISTERED OUR CONCERN ABOUT
IRAQI CONVOY AND THIS, COUPLED WITH HOSS'S PRESUMED
POSITION AGAINST INTRODUCTION OF IRAQIS,MAY BE ENOUGH TO CONVINCE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 DAMASC 01578 211701Z

THE SYRIANS TO FIND SOME PRETEXT TO DELAY TRANSIT OF FUTURE
CONVOYS. I BELIEVE THEY WILL BE INTERESTED IN SO DOING.
MURPHY

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